

NEWS RELEASE

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First Human Case of West Nile Virus Confirmed In Georgia

Georgians Urged To Protect Themselves Against Mosquitoes

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health today confirmed the state's first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in 2013. The adult patient from Brantley County was infected in May and recovered without hospitalization or complications. Most people get WNV after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Because of this early case of WNV and the heavy rain over the past few weeks, the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is urging Georgians to protect themselves against mosquitoes.

"Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes that may be infected with West Nile Virus," said Rosmarie Kelly, Ph.D., MPH, Georgia Department of Public Health entomologist. "In the heat of summer, it can take less than 10 days to go from egg to adult mosquito."

Residents can reduce the number of mosquitoes around their homes by emptying standing water from containers - flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires, and birdbaths - anything that holds water and gives mosquitoes a place to thrive. The most effective way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites and the best way to do that is to observe the **"Five D's of WNV Prevention."**

- **Dusk/Dawn** – Mosquitoes carrying WNV usually bite at dusk and dawn, so avoid or limit outdoor activity at these times.
- **Dress** – Wear loose-fitting, long sleeved shirts and pants to reduce the amount of exposed.
- **DEET** – Cover exposed skin with an insect repellent containing the DEET, which is the most effective repellent against mosquito bites.
- **Drain** - Empty any containers holding standing water because they can be excellent breeding grounds for virus-carrying mosquitoes.
- **Doors** – Make sure doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly, and fix torn or damaged screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house.



Symptoms of WNV include headache, fever, neck discomfort, muscle and joint aches, swollen lymph nodes and a rash that usually develop three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The elderly, those with compromised immune systems, or those with other underlying conditions are at greater risk for complications from the disease.

Of those who become infected with WNV, most will fight off the virus without any symptoms or will develop less severe West Nile fever. One in 150 people bitten by infected mosquitoes will develop encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord). Approximately 10 percent of people with a severe form of WNV infection die from their illness, and others suffer long-term nervous system problems.

People with questions about WNV should speak to their healthcare providers or call their local county health department, environmental health office.

More information on WNV can be found at the CDC's site:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

Further information on repellents is also available from the CDC:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm

The Department's surveillance data on the West Nile Virus is available on O.A.S.I.S. at <http://oasis.state.ga.us/>.

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About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years of consolidation with other departments. At the state level, DPH functions through numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices. Locally, DPH funds and collaborates with Georgia's 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information about DPH, visit www.dph.ga.gov.